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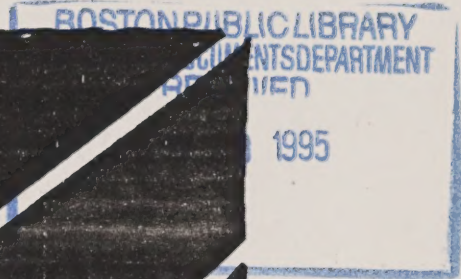
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Spectacle, Event, and New Life in the City:

THEATER AND THE ARTS IN BOSTON'S MIDTOWN



prepared by

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prepared for the

BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

FEBRUARY 1988

Theater

1988



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STREETSCAPE PLANS FOR THE PUBLIC REALM

Boston Cultural District

Revitalization of the Boston Cultural District focuses on realizing the vision of a fresh identifiable character for this important part of downtown. The initial concept concentrates on an image of a place that is safe and sane as well as festive and fun, a place to go in the evening for theater, cinema, music, dance, opera, and many other activities allied with the arts, as well as for dining, dancing, and late evening entertainment. It must also become a daytime place that has a stable mixture of activities, and the other commercial components of a central business district that complements a vital urban area.

The conceptual approach has been, first, to identify the components that contribute to and animate the overall identity of a "city cultural district" -- beginning with the area's many theaters and cinemas -- to arrive at loosely-defined boundaries of Boston's semi-coherent and semi-integrated "district." This has included the identification of major points of entry and recognizeable places that bring activity in and out, which energize as well as blend the district with the surrounding city; locating the important places and focal points within the district, including squares, corners, crossings, buildings, alleys, arcades, and other unique physical assets where special and varied activities reinforce or construct circulation links between places and among the major destination points in and around Boston's Cultural District.

Working with a loosely-defined district, an important task is to animate and make visually appealing the total environment of the district through physical improvements to buildings and streets, through addition of planting, amenities, and new environmental features; regulating signs and graphics and designing dramatic festive uses of lighting. And above all, it has been important to find imaginative regenerative uses for both unoccupied buildings and development sites.

The Cultural District has no single center. It is an area within an old section of the city. The concept plan develops several potentially important identifiable places that give the district character and a sense of orientation within Boston.

A promenade through Boston's Cultural District, conceptually defining its boundaries, begins at the south corner of the Boston Common, continues up Tremont Street to Stuart and Tremont and the adjacent Hinge block, the functional center of the District. Proceeding through and around the Hinge Block to Washington, one traverses the edge of Chinatown,

and proceeds through historic Liberty Square to the Opera House and on toward Downtown Crossing. Although the District encompasses a small corner of Boston, it is an area with unlimited potential. It is a melting pot of varied populations and users, and a fascinating labyrinth of interesting and important buildings, corners, alleys and spaces. A somewhat forgotten corner of our city, the Cultural District has the potential for becoming intense, diverse, creative, and alive, for embodying everything that is exciting, alluring, and magical about urban life, and for setting the stage for Boston's artistic and cultural renaissance.



Opera House
Square

Boston Common
Corner

Liberty Square

Hinge Block

Tremont Circus

New England
Medical Center



Boston Common: extending the beauty of greenery and the liveliness of public events into the Cultural District.

With minor redesign, the southern edge of Boston Common can become an outdoor extension of the Cultural District. This neglected corner of the Common can come alive again, keeping pace with the infusion of new energy into the Cultural District, and encouraging pedestrians to move freely between the two. Creating a well-defined oval at the southeast corner, with an open area in the middle, will echo the formal design of the Parkman bandstand, improving the alignment between this focal point, and the southeastern corner. At the center of the oval the open area can become an outdoor stage, perfect for street theater, improvisation, and urban festivities much like "Hyde Park Corner." The unused maintenance building will become a new outdoor cafe, welcoming people into the Common, and making it attractive for office and visitor use in the daytime. Other new facilities offer refreshments and information for visitor orientation. A reciprocal relationship will begin to develop, bringing a sense of the serenity and beauty of Boston Common into the Cultural District, and bringing cultural activities into the outdoor spaces of the park.

At the junction of Avery Street and Boston Common, an information kiosk and the historic subway entrance flank the pathways to the interior of the Common. Along the Tremont Street frontage, a series of small kiosks provides visitor information, reinforcing the Common as a central orientation point for all of Boston. Pairs of small structures offering refreshments and concessions frame the paths into the new plaza, completing the system of refreshments, information, and pedestrian services established to the north.

Devices such as planting or the extension of the Burial Ground wrought iron fencing could strengthen the identity and distinctiveness of this redesigned corner of Boston Common, unifying the entire south frontage and forming a clear edge to the Cultural District. The southeastern corner will also have redesigned circulation and enhanced planting, encouraging the flow between the Common, Boylston and Charles Streets. The Charles Street corner will also become a more dramatic and visible entrance to the Common, marked by two pairs of granite posts which form a handsome complement to the fencing and landscaping materials used nearby.

Boylston at Charles: historic Piano Row and Boston Common create a dramatic entrance to the Cultural District.

Although this is the outermost corner of the District, it is highly visible from Boylston and Charles, and is in a sense more of a gateway to the Cultural District than any other intersection. Strong architectural features, including the row of historic music-oriented buildings along Boylston and the southern edge of Boston Common will be respected and strengthened. The setback at the southeast corner will be improved through design improvements including the addition of a dramatically lighted kiosk with theatre information, strengthening the identity of this corner as a gateway to the Cultural District. Facades and frontages along Boylston will be emphasized to reveal the beauty of this series of historic buildings.

Boylston at Tremont: Boston Common, downtown office and retail, meet the Cultural District.

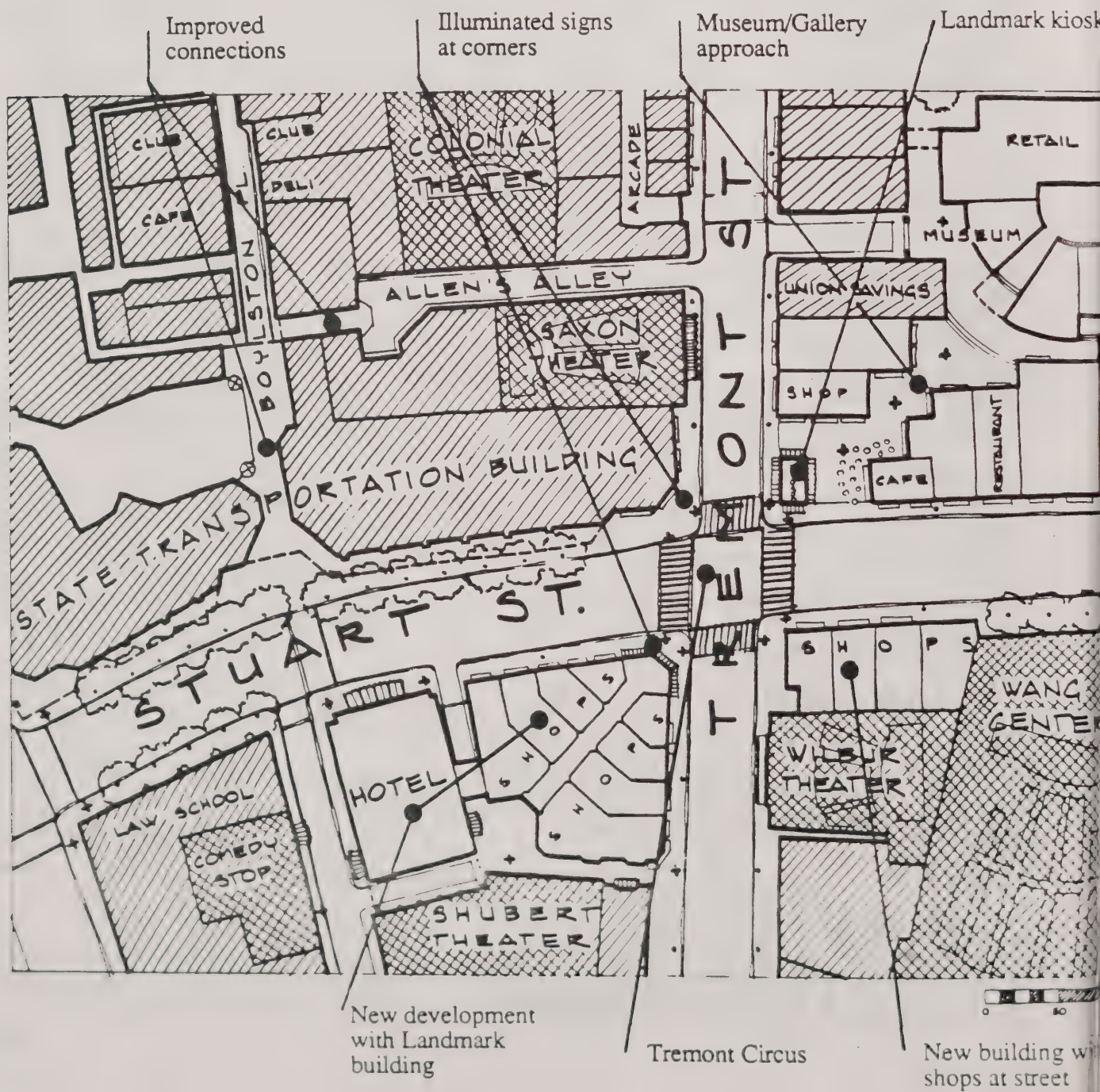
This important junction must weave the adjacent urban elements, extending cultural uses into this southern corner of the Common, and bringing a sense of the beauty and greenery of the Common into the Cultural District. Minor redesign of the Touraine Building corner at street level would encourage pedestrian access into the Hinge Block from the Common and from downtown; pedestrian flow around the Touraine Building and along the western entrance to LaGrange will make the Common visible and accessible from the interior of the District. An illuminated sign atop the Touraine Building announces the Cultural District.



Stuart at Tremont: "Tremont Circus," crossroads of the Cultural District.

This important place functions as the heart of the new cultural network and in the intensity of its theatre related uses most symbolizes a revitalized urban neighborhood. With strong and dramatic lighting it beckons drivers and pedestrians to enter into the world of the theater. A splash of street light, suggesting the bright lights of the theater, forms a welcoming umbrella. Together with the unique paving and appealing mix of uses this becomes a dynamic place, extending a visual invitation to move into an area of activity, excitement, and cultural interest.

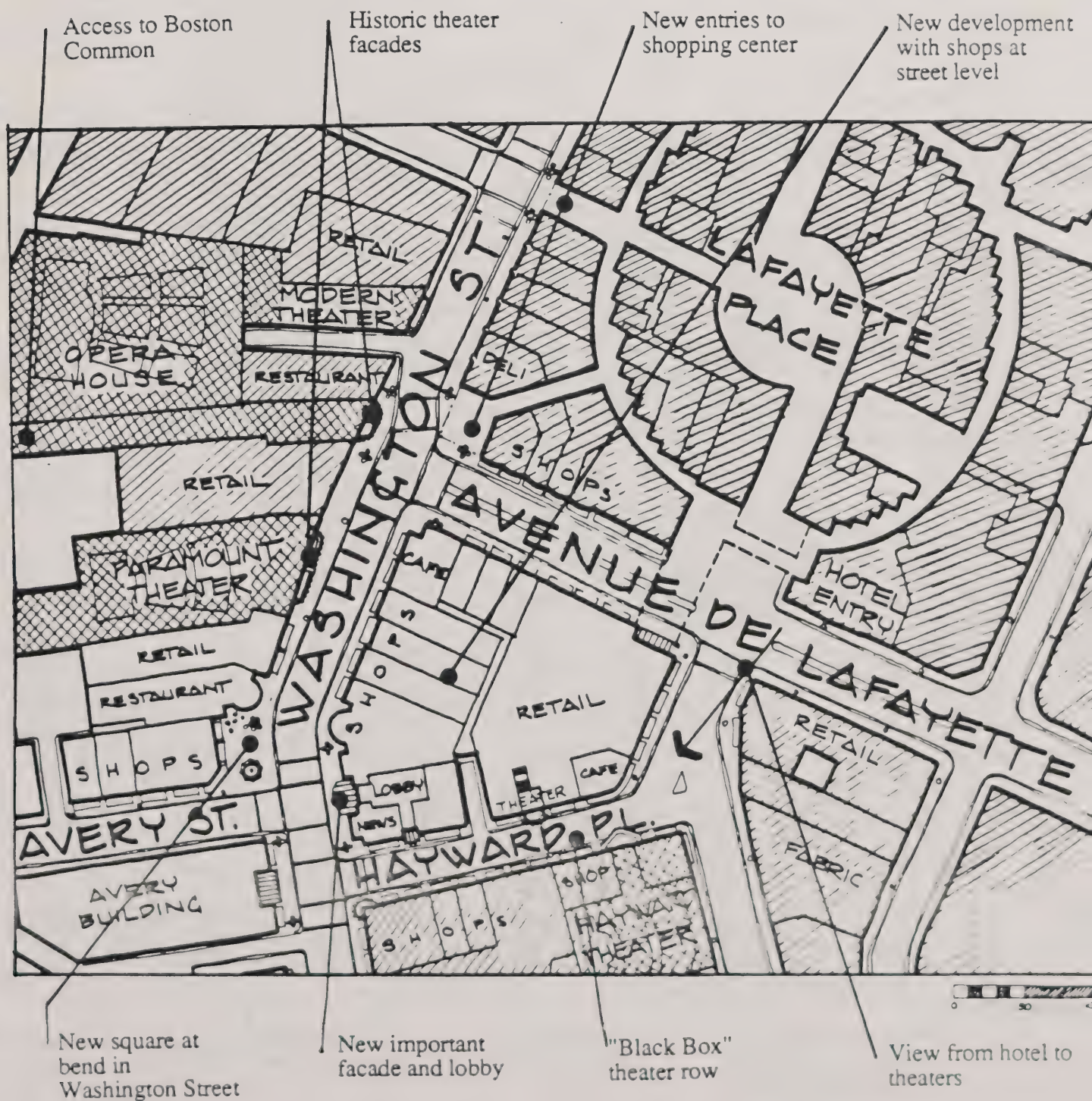
Stuart & Tremont is the anchor for the major theater group by night -- the Wilbur, Shubert, Wang Center, Colonial and Saxon, and for new hotel, retail and shopping activity by day. By opening Boylston Place at the Transportation Building, Boylston Place and Warrenton are naturally connected, with the potential for developing a character all their own. By day they create a new and inviting path between the interior of the District and Boston Common. By night these alluring alleys house a series of small theaters, cabarets and nightclubs, a natural outgrowth of the vital nightlife in the area.



Avenue de Lafayette at Washington: "Opera House Square," a district within a district.

This intersection is the terminus of an important view corridor along Avenue de Lafayette to the Opera House. Its identity centers around the restoration of the Opera House facade, around new access into Lafayette Place, and the reorientation of commercial uses along Avenue de Lafayette and upper Washington to bring small shop fronts, doorways, and pedestrian activity back to the street. Restoration of the

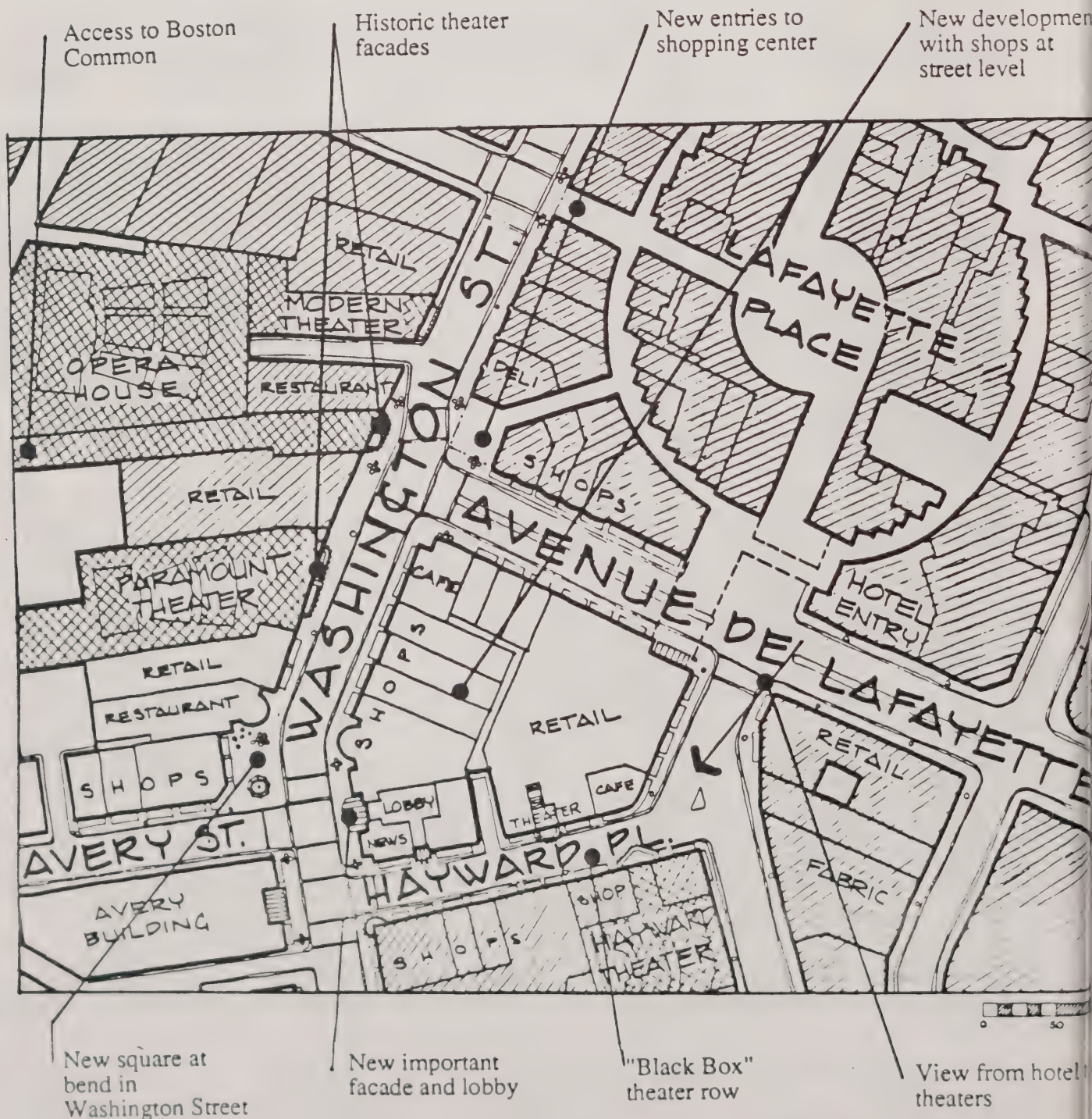
Opera House, Paramount Theater, and Modern Theater will reestablish the theater-based identity of this block. Redesign of circulation around the Opera House will improve access from Washington to the Common, via Mason Street. Together these changes will interweave commercial, theater, and recreational uses, creating an environment of mutual enrichment.



Avery Street and Washington: a vital connection between Boston Common and the Cultural District.

At the interior of the Cultural District, this intersection divides upper and lower Washington Street. It is a visually important corner, and a relatively large intersection formed by the confluence of Hayward, Avery, and Washington. A new plaza will be created on Boston Common opposite Avery Street, and pathways will be redesigned to also guide people from other parts of the Common into this new gathering place. A small new building offering tourist information is at the terminus of Avery, and the historic subway entrance will continue to preside over the plaza.

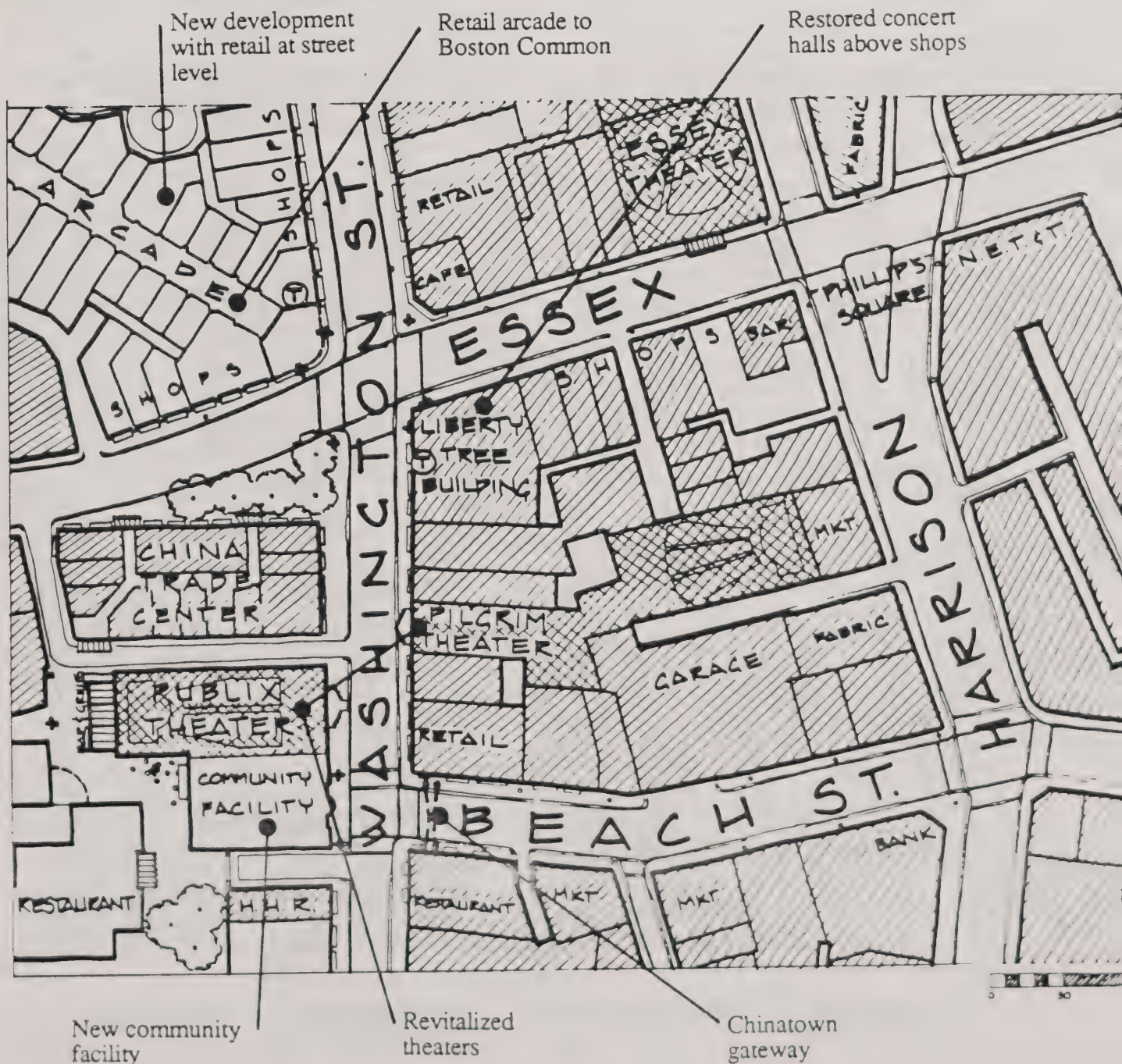
Hayward Place with its new and restored small theaters also spills naturally into this intersection. The new Hayward Place will house a series of "black box" theater spaces--small, informal places geared to the presentation of amateur and experimental theater. These small-scale theaters facing onto Hayward will give this small street a distinctive character appropriate to the scale and central location of the street. Its new identity could extend to the Harrison Street corner of Hayward where a marquee could beckon people from the Lafayette Hotel and the downtown to a night of theater.



Essex at Washington: Liberty Square comes alive again.

Historic Liberty Square with as its cornerstone Liberty Tree Building is rich in its connections to Boston's colorful and illustrious musical history. The Liberty Tree Building, today in total disrepair, still houses a collection of small concert halls, suitable for rehabilitation into space for musical and cultural events of all kinds. With its beautiful relief sculpture depicting the symbol of the colonial "Sons of Liberty," a restored Liberty Tree Building lends vivid identity and a sense of history to this corner. Today this corner calls for the reinstatement of some of the historic uses which gave importance and vitality to the Cultural District, and for the addition of daytime retail uses to create 24-hour activity.

At the northwest corner a major new retail arcade will be oriented to the Essex/Washington intersection. It will be designed to encourage pedestrian flow from Essex to Avery, thus taking full advantage of the direct diagonal connection to Boston Common. The nearby Essex Theater is ripe for renovation into two small theaters, tying in naturally to the activities at the corner. Encouragement of retail at street level along Essex, in conjunction with new development at the northwest corner, will intensify daytime uses and strengthen the safety and attractiveness of this location around the clock.



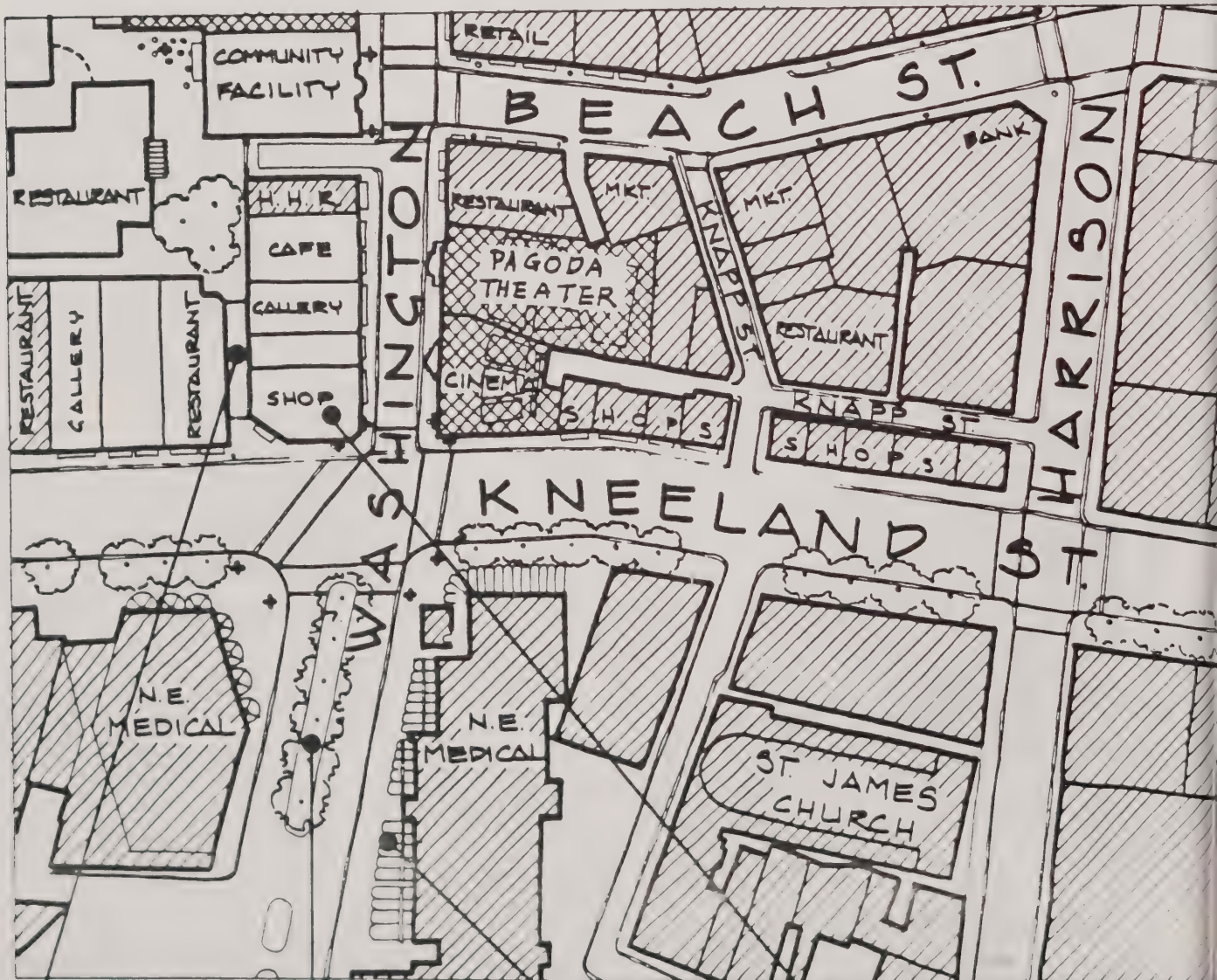
Beach Street at Washington: where Chinatown meets the Cultural District.

At Beach Street and Washington, Chinatown and the new Cultural District converge. Like Essex & Washington this intersection is an important junction between two active and densely populated neighborhoods, and it must serve the needs of each. Where Beach Street ends at the Hinge Block, new development will be oriented to uses serving Chinatown's residential community. The pedestrian flow from Beach will be through a redesigned LaGrange Street, providing a pathway into the interior of the block where an attractive new building complex will offer services and amenities of all kinds to residents and visitors alike. The transition from the Cultural District into Chinatown will be more formally announced, by a entrance or gateway where Beach meets Washington.

Stuart at Washington: a true edge to the Cultural District where it meets the vital New England Medical Center.

On both the north-south and east-west axis, Stuart Street signals an edge and an entry into a separate area. Approaching this spot from the east along Kneeland, the Cultural District is a visible presence, highlighted by a rooftop marquee at the southeast corner of the Hinge Block. Approaching from Washington, the real spine of the Cultural District, the street narrows as if to signal the change between the pedestrian scale of the cultural uses and the grand scale of the medical center.

The activities associated with the Medical Center occur at all hours, complementing the Cultural District, and lending an element of safety to the streets of the Cultural District, and supporting the range of new commercial introduced at the southeast corner.,



Improved access
to interior of block

New planting strip

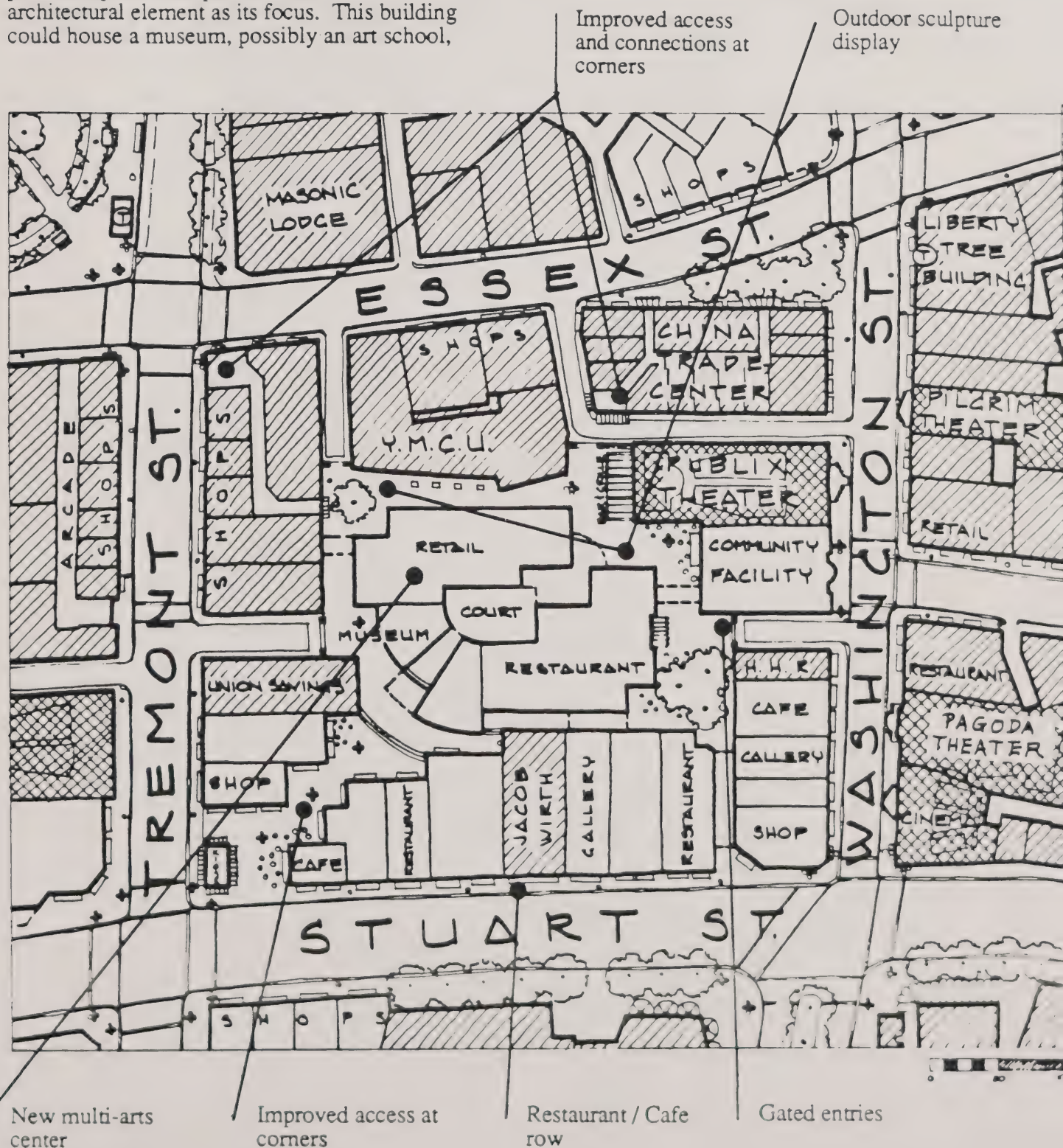
Introduce add-on
retail at street

Gateway signage
on roof

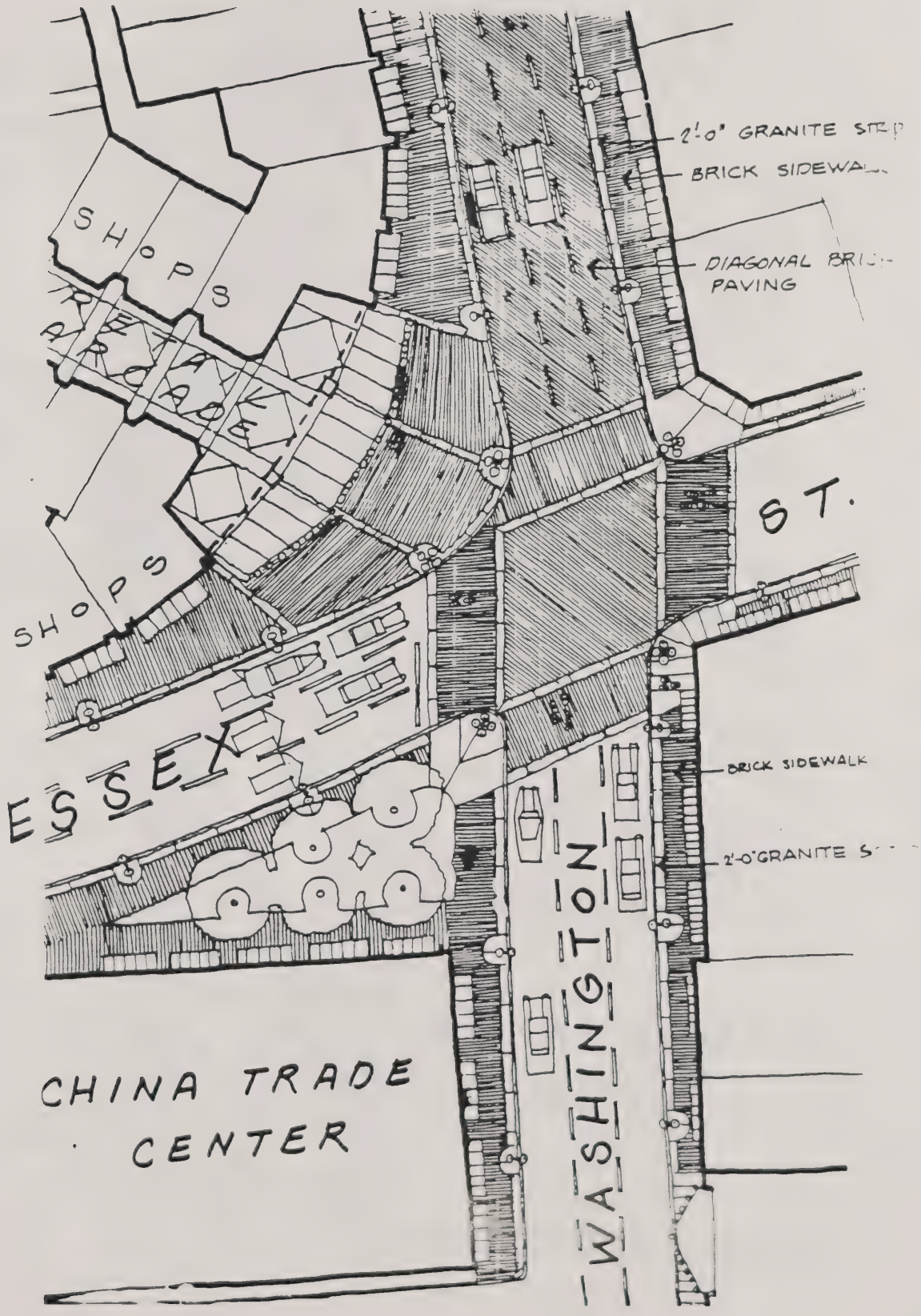
Hinge Block: heart of the Cultural District.

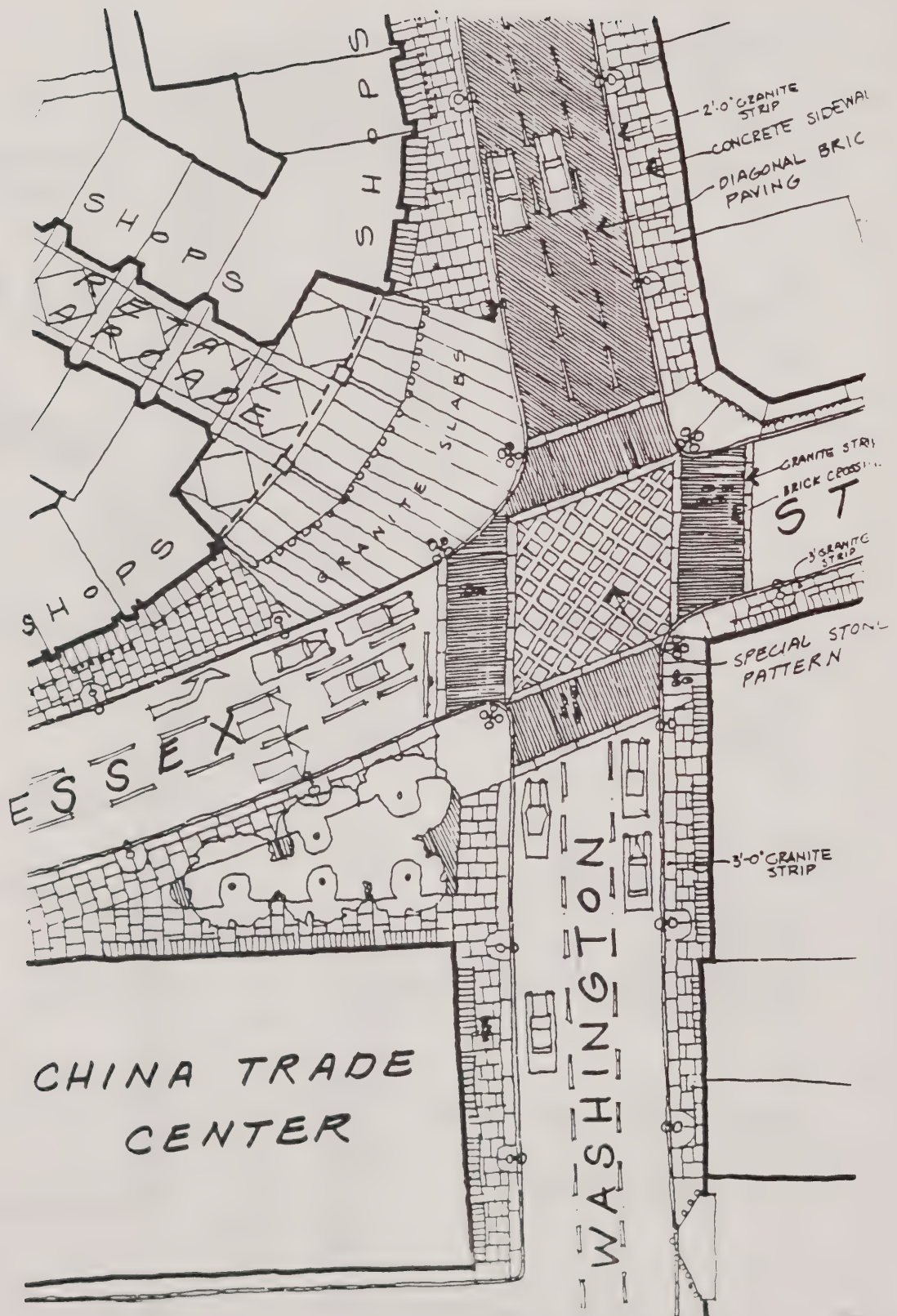
The "Hinge Block," so named because its central location is in fact defined by the boundaries of four districts, is the geographical and functional heart of the new Cultural District. It has several historic buildings in it, including the H. H. Richardson Building on Washington, the Y.M.C. Union on Essex, and Jacob Wirth restaurant on Stuart Street. Its surrounding structures are of low and medium height. At its center is a spacious area which lends itself to creation of a protected pedestrian place with a new architectural element as its focus. This building could house a museum, possibly an art school,

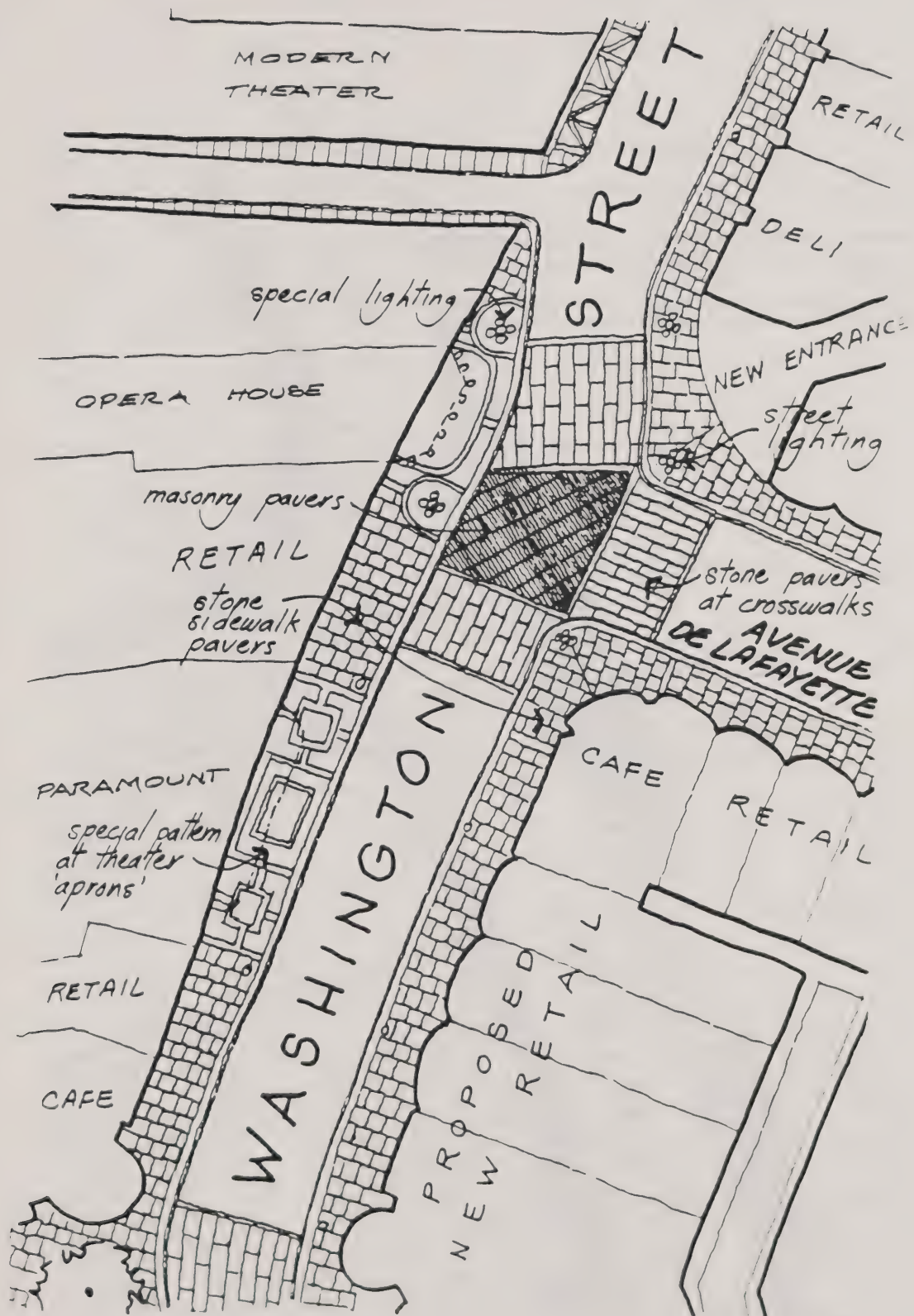
as well as shops and offices, an outdoor sculpture garden, and a cafe, all taking advantage of the light and warmth of its southern exposure. The new building will be visible from the Stuart/Tremont intersection, and that corner will be redesigned to invite people to enter and walk through the block. On this edge of "Tremont Circus," a corner kiosk will attract pedestrians, and offer services supportive of the theater and nightlife activities nearby.

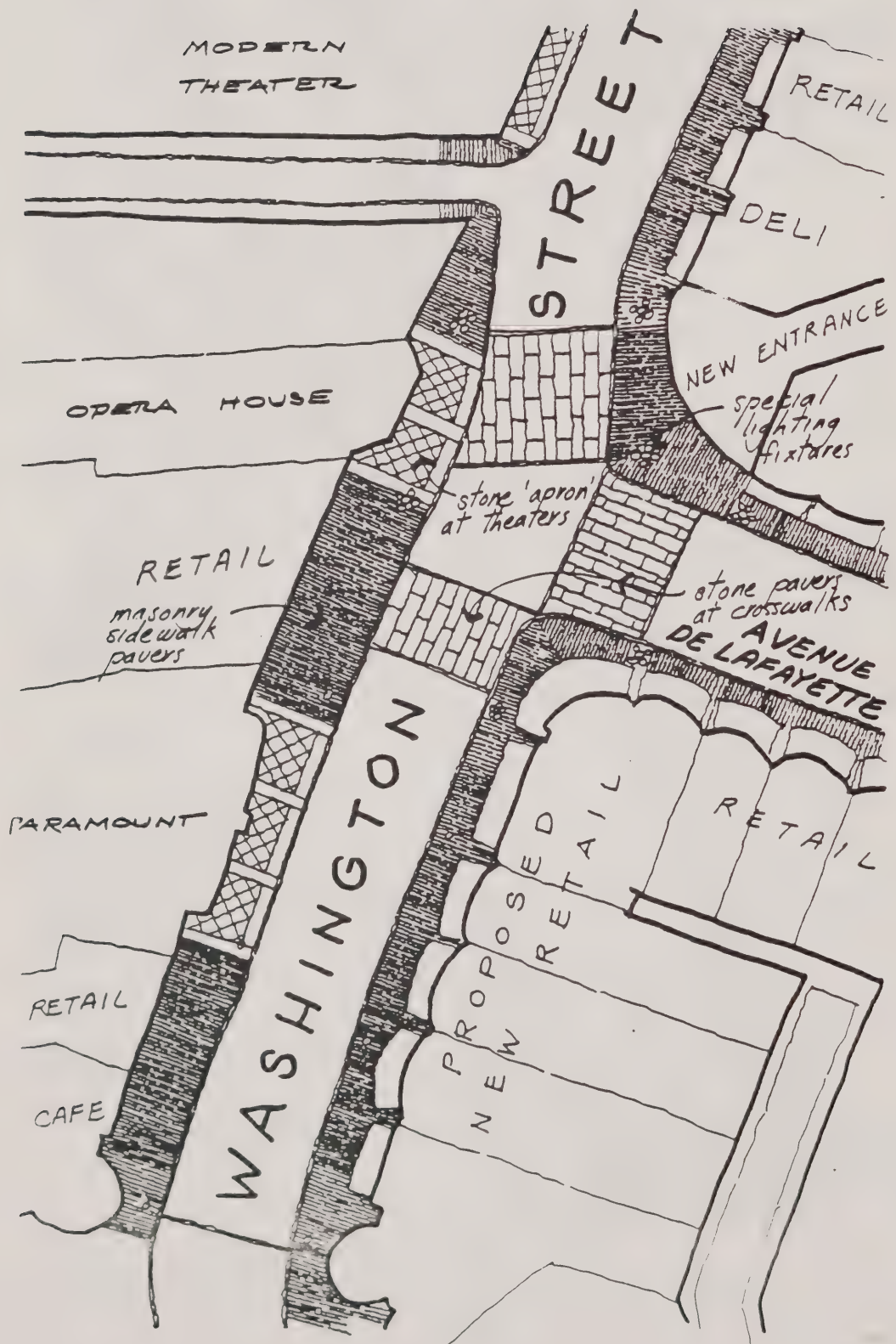


II STREET AND SIDEWALK PAVING TREATMENT

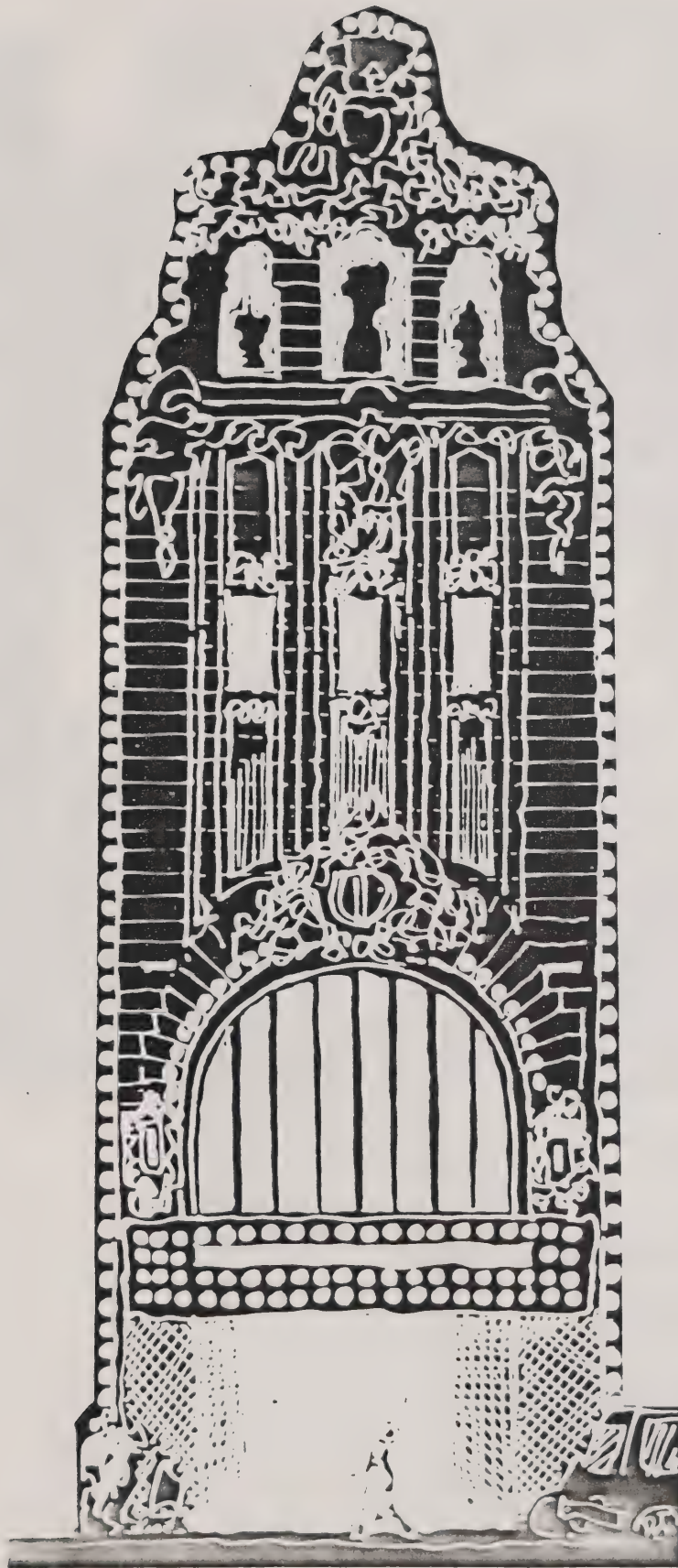




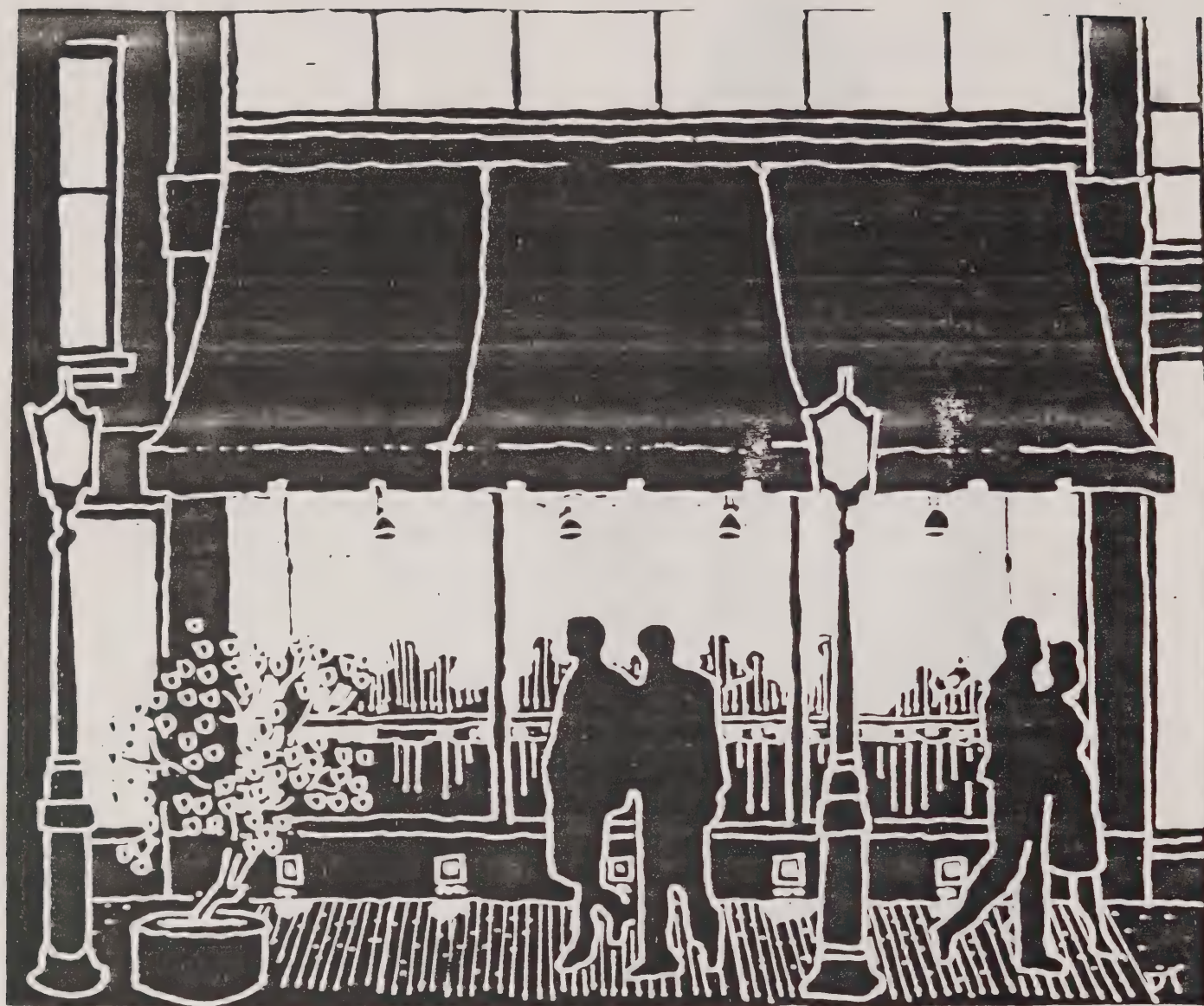




III BUILDING ILLUMINATION



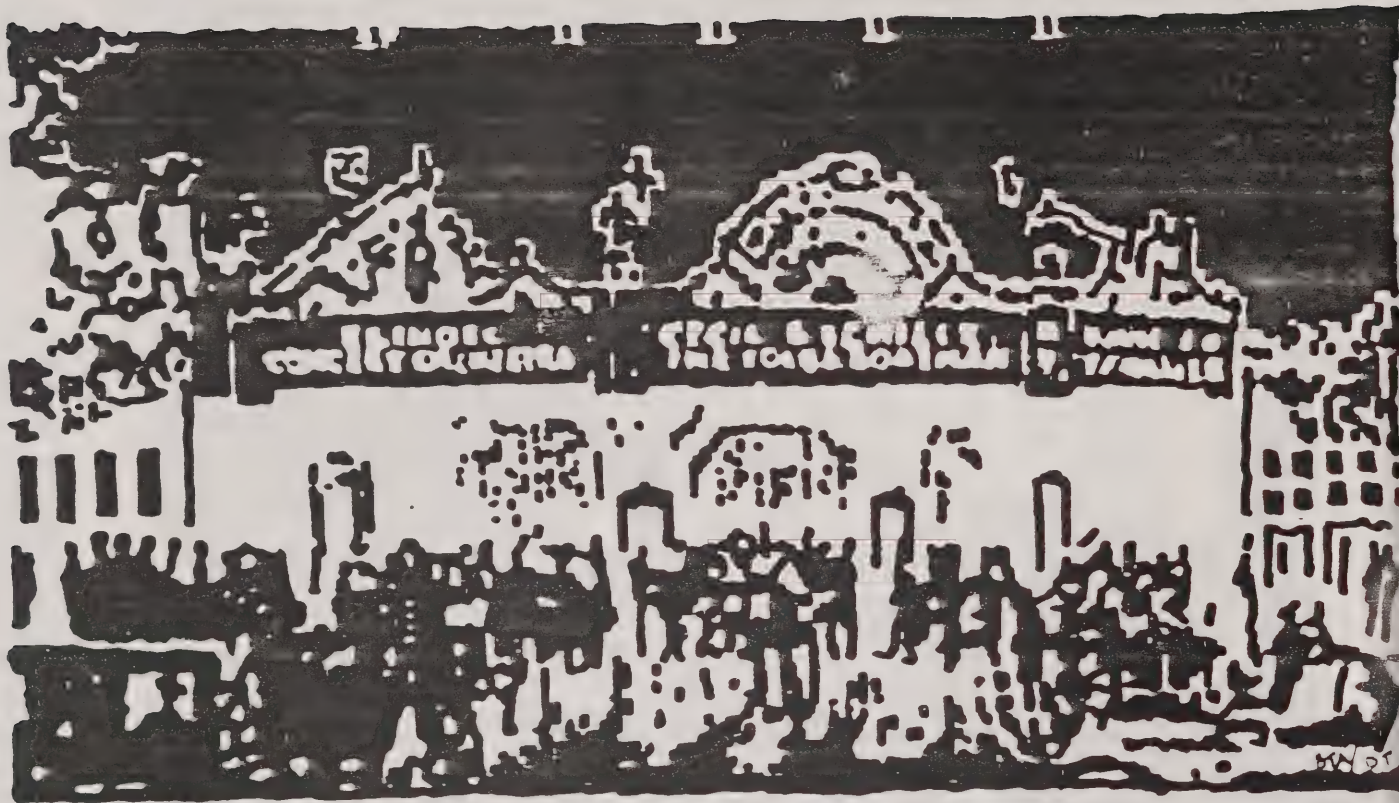
buildings of
special
illumination
become points
of reference,
energy, and
excitement



restaurants and
cafe's
activate and
light the
street edge



illuminated
interior light
the street at
nite - pedestrian
invitation and
safety



Identification,
invitation +
artistry of
the theater
marquee —



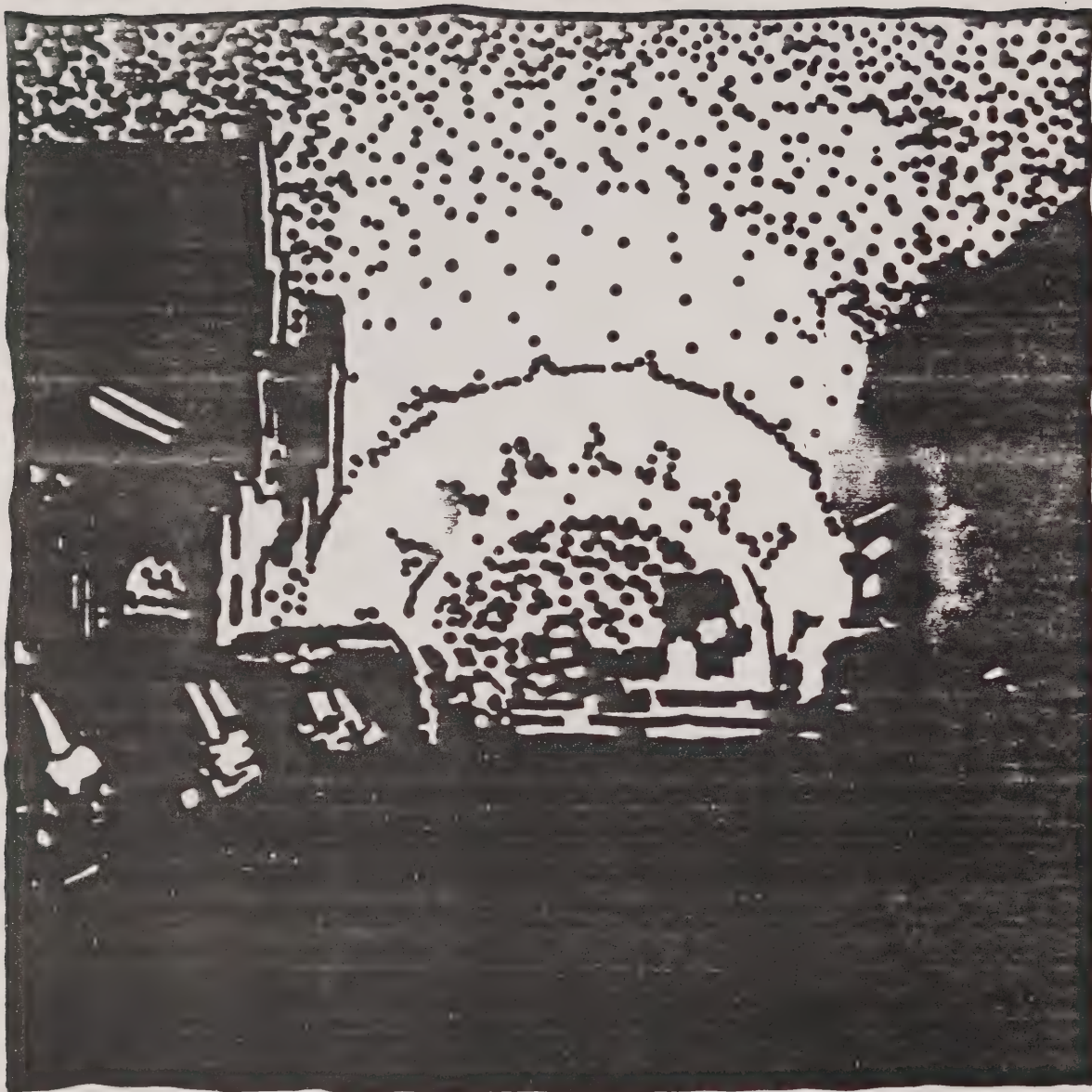
lighted canopies
write —
provide
"nite-lite" for
the sidewalk



light and texture
change at
thresholds
are an
"invitation"



Scale and
spectacle of
a major
light event

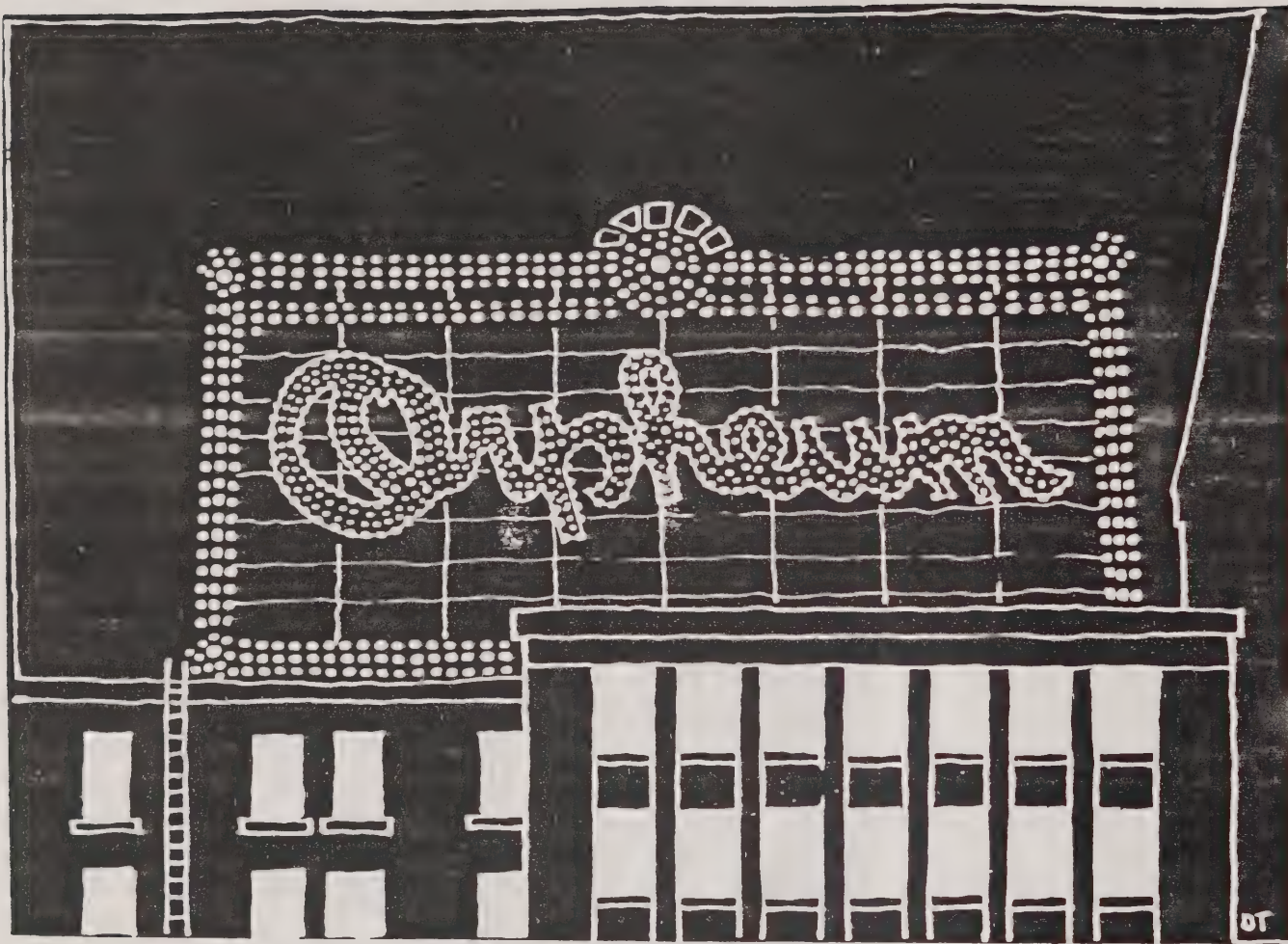


ILLUMINATED
GATE

IV SIGNS



artistry of the
sign for
color and
light on the
street



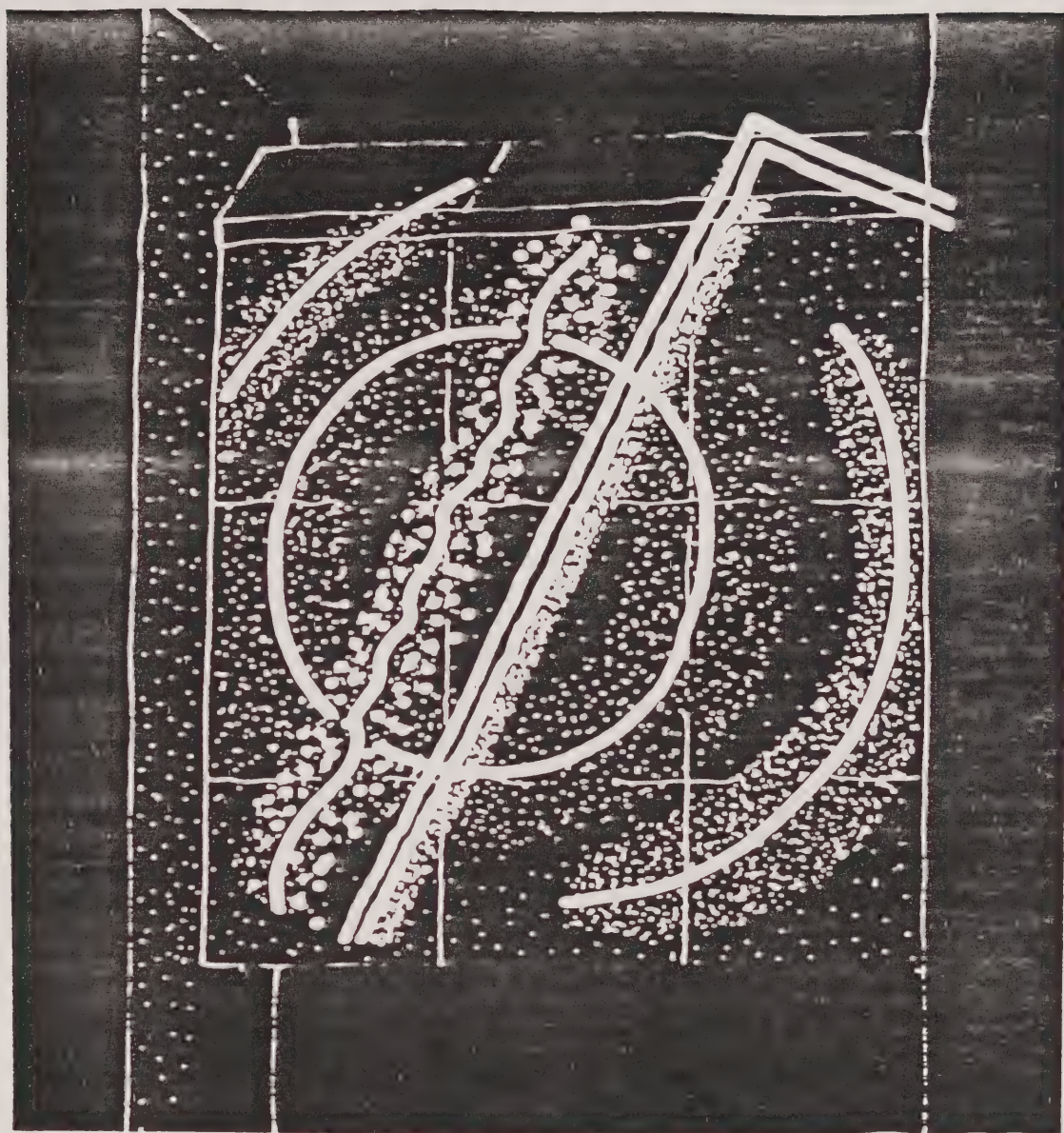
Artistry of
the sign offer
opportunities
for lighting
and identity
in the district



corner
opportunities
for
lighting,
signage,
information,
identification



Artistry of the
billboard offers
an opportunity
for major
lighting
events

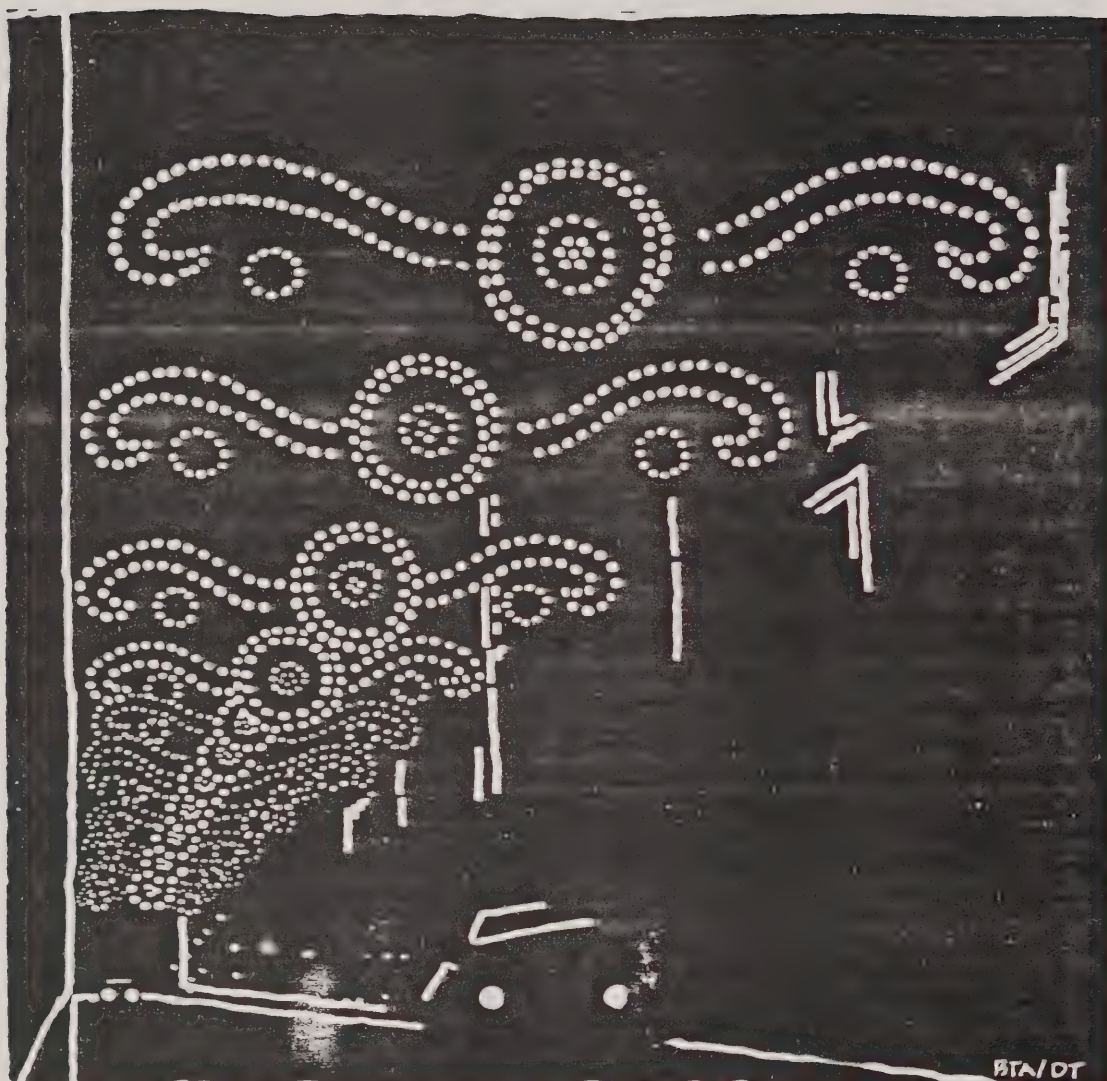


Neon signs

V STREET LIGHTING



Street Lighting Plan

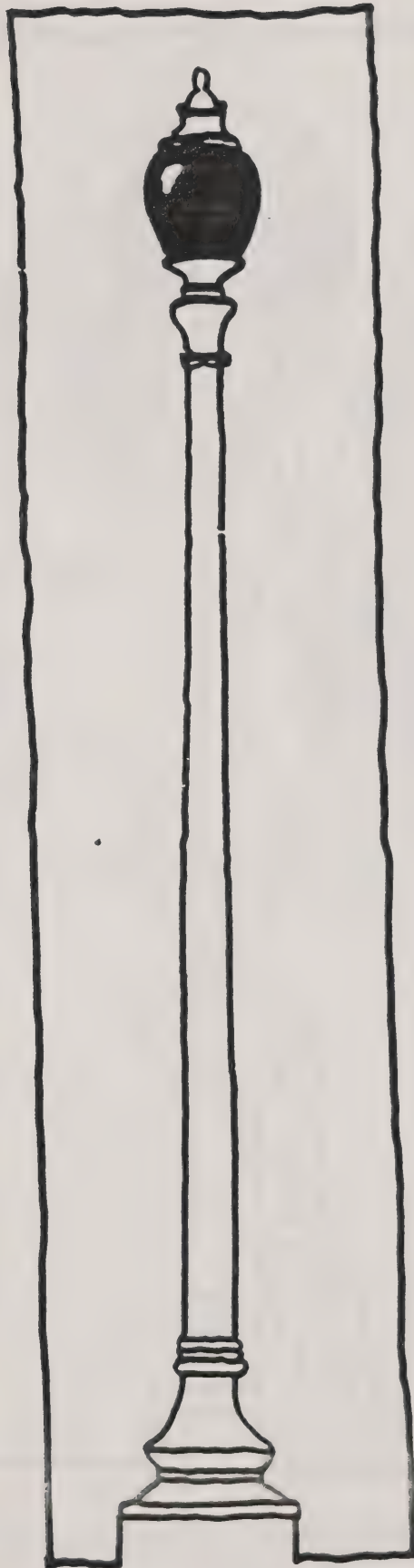


lights of celebration
form a
luminous
ceiling
modulating
space and
stimulating
activity



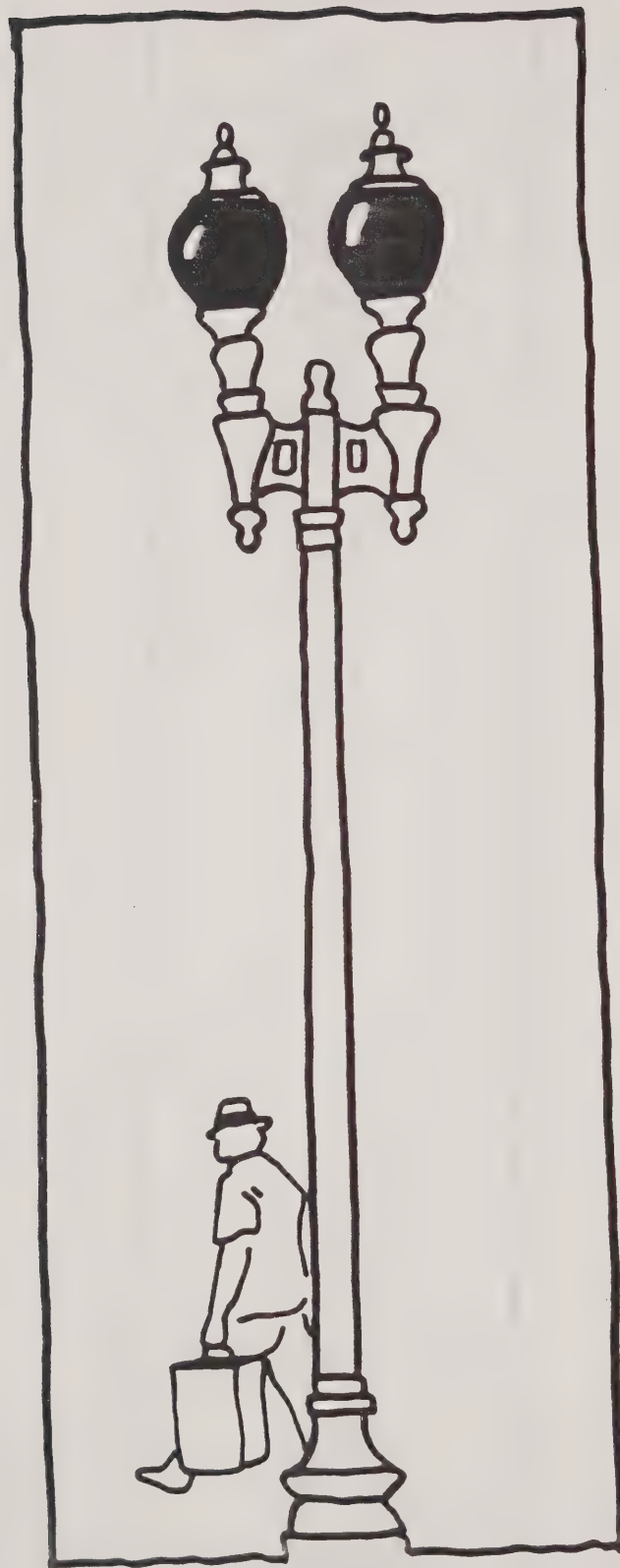
Twoli Lights

VI LIGHTING FIXTURES



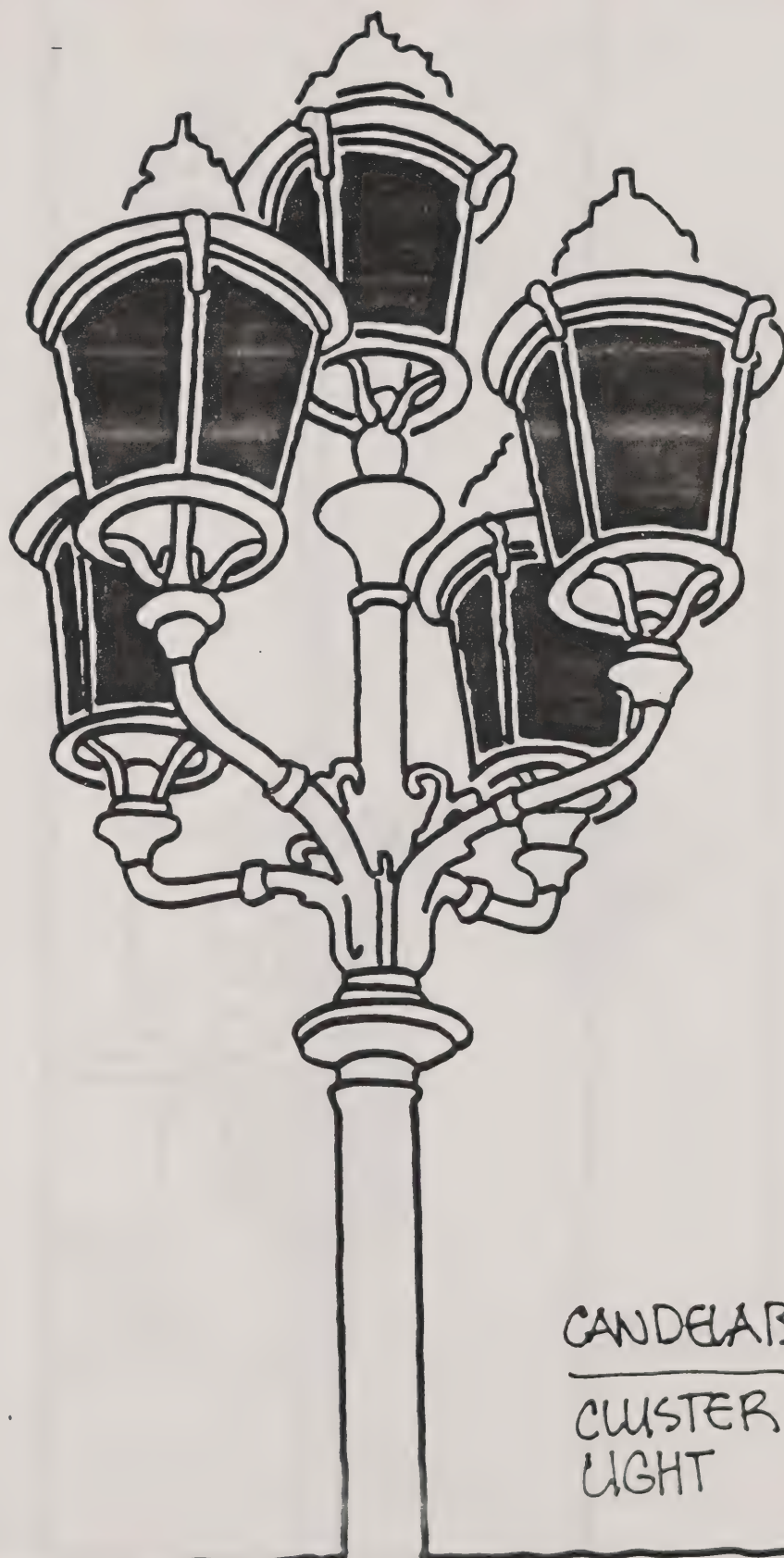
ACORN
FIXTURE

SINGLE
GLOBE



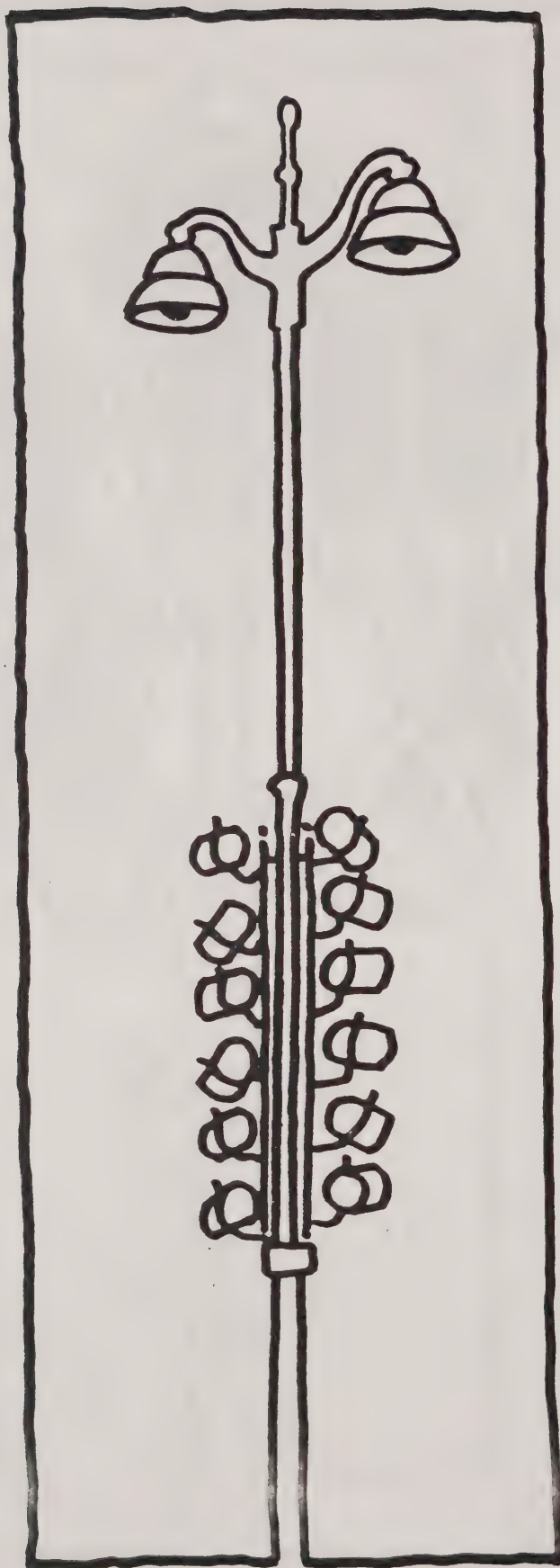
ACORN
FIXTURE

DOUBLE
GLOBE

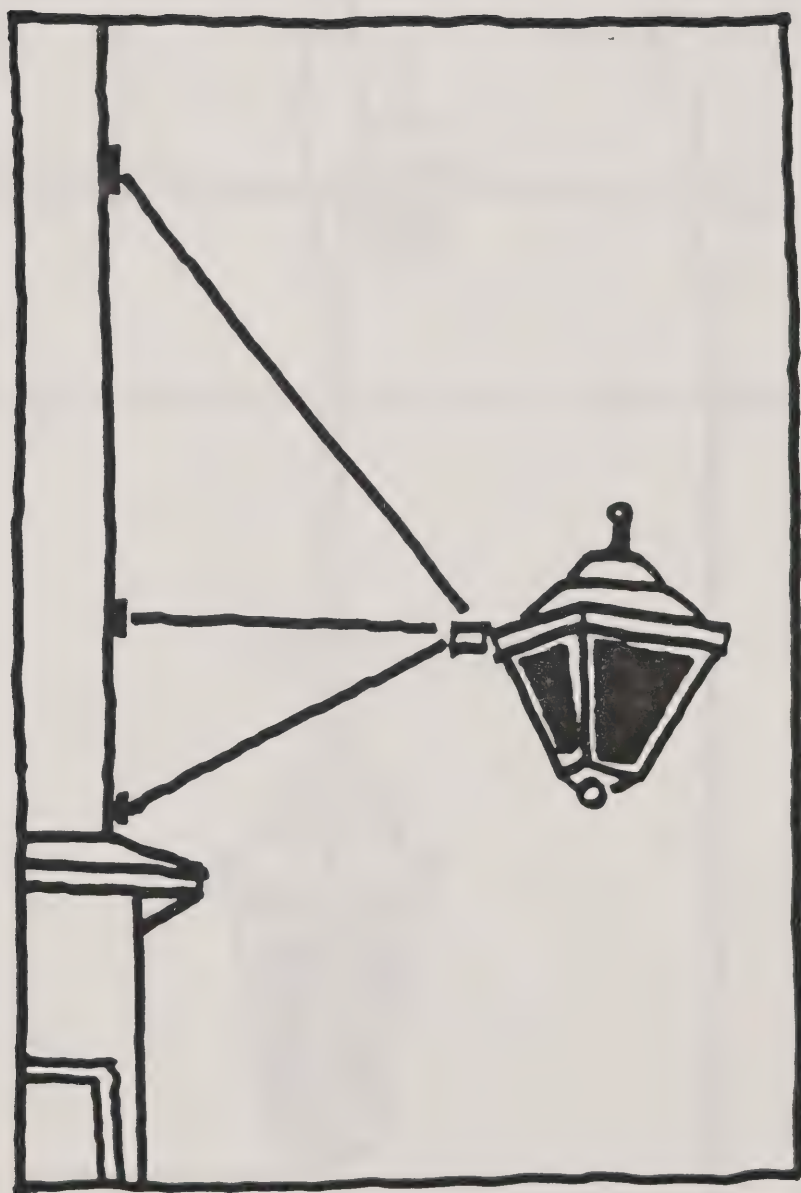


CANDELABRA

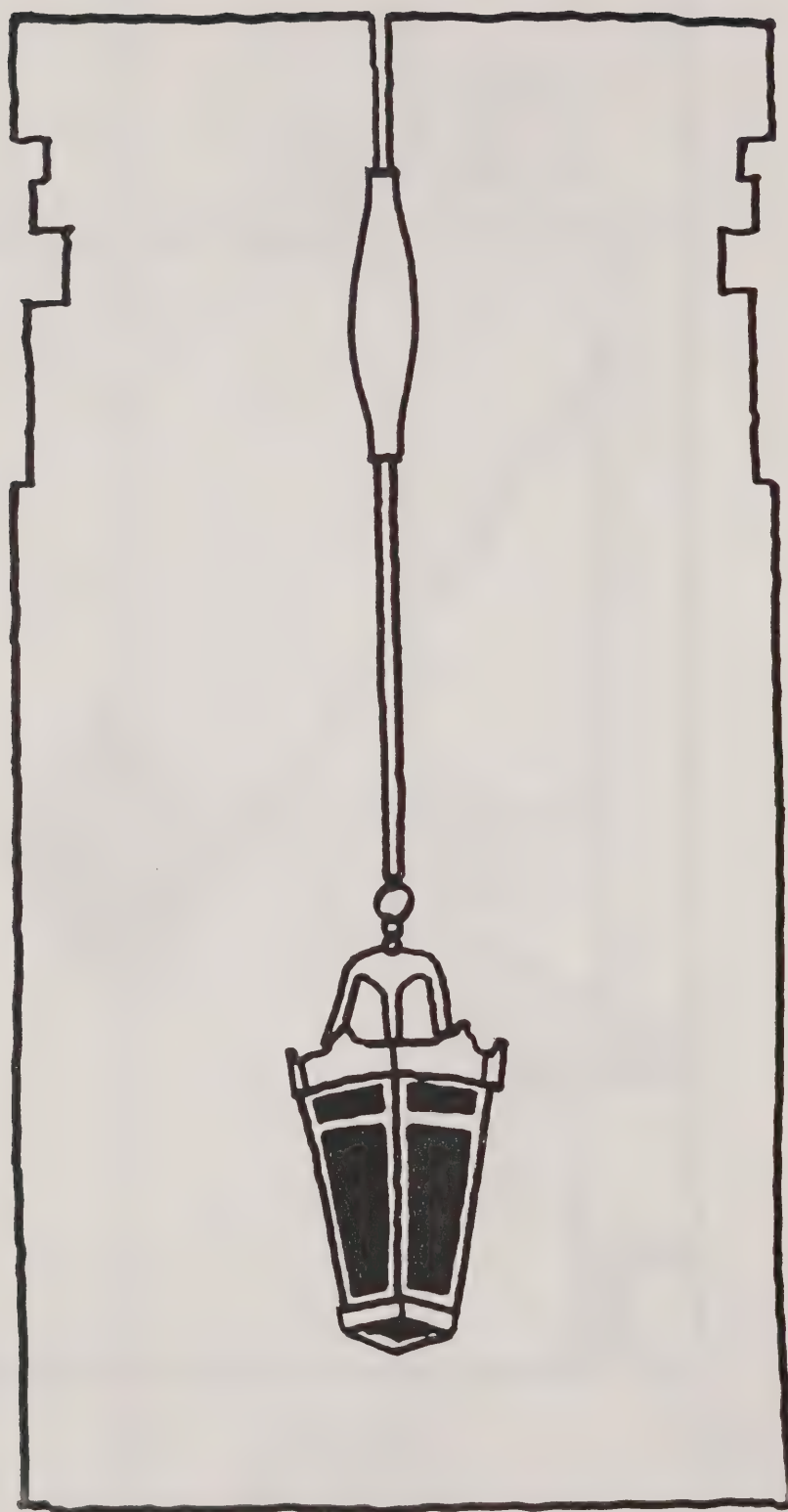
CLUSTER
LIGHT



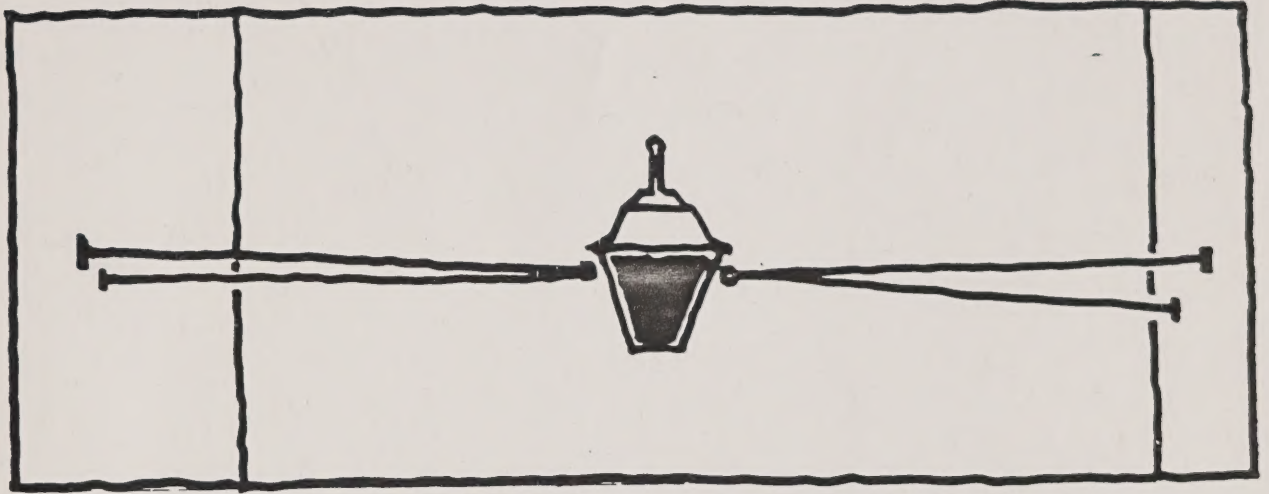
SPOTLIGHT



WALL
HUNG



PENDANT
LIGHT



suspension

